

Rats, Rain, and Running by GreenLily474

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Summary: "We're not kids anymore. I mean, what did you think? We're gonna sit in my basement all day, playing video games for the rest of our lives?" What led to Mike saying that and what led to Will sitting in Castle Byers crying as he looked at old photos? A theory fic based on scenes from the trailer and set pictures.

Rats, Rain, and Running

"Start a band?" said Mike with a chuckle.

"It was just a random thought," said Will. "We could learn to play."

"Maybe," said Lucas. "But in this town, we'd probably get laughed off the stage."

"You're probably right, it's a stupid idea," said Will. The slight strain in his voice did not go unnoticed by his friends.

"You really want to do this, don't you?" asked Mike gently.

"No, forget about it," said Will. He glanced in the direction of some of the protesters before his eyes drifted to Melvalds where his mother was working and Radio Shack where Bob had worked before he got killed. "Let's just go check out those games."

Will started down the street and Mike and Lucas followed. "Camping," said Will. "I think my Mom might finally let me go again."

"She didn't let you go with us in April," said Lucas. "Do you really think she's changed her mind by now."

"Maybe, I mean it's summer," said Will.

"You really aren't missing anything," said Mike. "Camping just isn't what it used to be anyway. A lot of things aren't."

"Yeah, a lot of these shops are empty around here now that the mall is open," said Lucas. "Look, they're selling Nintendo."

The three boys walked over to the store with the new gaming system in the window. Mike and Lucas began discussing the new games. Will noticed several rats running into the alley. His stomach suddenly felt like it was full of ice. He slowly inched toward the alley. For a brief moment, he thought he saw some sort of tentacle sticking out from between the dumpsters.

"Hey, guys-" Will started to say, but he realized that Mike and Lucas

had started walking toward the carnival games. Will sighed. His friends often failed to notice that he wasn't with them, even Mike had been doing it recently. He started to walk briskly to catch up to his friends. He felt his pockets and realized he didn't have enough money. He glanced at Melvalds. His mother would give him money if she could, but he knew things had been tight, especially with all of his therapy.

Mike and Lucas had always been willing to give him money, but he was just tired of being in that situation. Before he'd been kidnapped by a demagorgan, he'd been allowed to rake leaves, mow lawns or shovel snow to make money, but his mother had been too scared to let him do so much of what he had done in the past. He felt more awkward than ever having to ask for money from his friends. He'd been feeling a certain distance from them for a while.

He had been separated from them when they took on the terrors of the Upside Down thanks to being trapped there in 1983 then being possessed by the Mind Flayer in 1984. Eleven and Max may have been the newest members of the party, but they had fought extra dimensional creatures with Mike, Lucas, and Dustin.

Will stopped in his tracks and made an about face. He walked back to the bike rack. Mike, Lucas, and Dustin had all gotten new bikes recently. Will still had the same bike he'd gotten in the 5th grade. He didn't resent his mother for not being able to get him a new bike, but it was just one more thing that made him feel alienated from his friends.

Will peddled back to his house as fast as he could. He felt the warm summer light on his face and wanted to just lay down on the ground and bask in it, but he noticed the clouds and figured it would rain soon. Will saw some dandelion seeds floating in the breeze and wished he could join them. He decided to read a book to help himself relax so he could try to figure out what he'd seen (and if he'd actually seen it) and how to deal with whatever it was.

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"Where's Will?" Mike asked Lucas. Lucas looked around.

"I don't know," said Lucas.

"Will!" Mike called. No answer. "Let's trace our steps and find him."

The boys walked all the way back to the bike rack and noticed that Will's bike was gone. "Maybe he went to the mall to see Dustin," said Lucas.

"I haven't seen him," said Dustin, who had been talking to Steve Harrington. "He's not with El and Max either." Dustin point to the Claires' where Eleven and Max were going to get their ears pierced.

"Maybe he went home," said Mike.

"Why would he go all the way back there?" asked Lucas.

"I don't know, but we have to check," said Mike.

When the three boys got to the house and knocked on the door, Will didn't answer. Mike began to knock more frantically and Dustin peered i

nto the window. "He's sitting on the couch and covering his ears."

"What?" said Mike. He decided to try to open the door. It wasn't locked. "Will, are you okay? We couldn't find you."

"Sorry," said Will. "I just didn't feel good and decided to come home."

"You can't just disappear like that," said Lucas. "We were worried sick."

"I can do whatever I want," said Will angrily. "You guys aren't my babysitters."

"We know we aren't your babysitters, Will," said Lucas. "But c'mon, you should tell us that you've decided to leave when you're hanging out with us."

"You guys were the ones who walked off and left me behind. I got distracted for a couple seconds and you were two blocks away already. You didn't even notice I wasn't with you and it's not even the

first time it's happened! Why should I have to tell you I'm going home when you guys walked off without me?"

"Sorry, Will, we didn't mean to leave you behind like that," said Lucas.

"You never do," said Will as he hastily wiped his eyes.

"Will, what's wrong?" asked Mike.

"Nothing," said Will. "Nothing anyone can change, at least."

"Maybe we could go camping or start a band, like you wanted. It's not such a bad idea," said Mike. He desperately wanted Will to feel better.

"I don't want to," said Will.

"What do you mean, you don't want to?" said Lucas. "Those things were your ideas."

"Yeah, and you guys didn't want to do them," said Will. "Do you think I want to do things with people who don't want to do them? How am I supposed to have fun if no one else wants to be there? It feels like that a lot lately."

"What does that mean?" asked Mike. "

"Yeah, what's going on? Talk to us," said Lucas.

"Look, it's just a lot of little things," said Will. "And sometimes, I don't know, I wish I could just vanish into thin air or something."

"Will, don't say that!" said Lucas.

"Don't say what?" asked Will.

"Don't say you want to vanish into thin air," said Lucas. "That's literally what happened when you got stuck in the Upside Down! You almost died and then you got possessed by the Mind Flayer and almost died again."

"I'm well aware of that, Lucas. I'm the one who actually went through it! And I've been dealing with it every day since it happened!"

"We know you're going through it, Will. We want to help," said Lucas.

"Help?" said Will. "No, you just want me to be all happy so you don't have to worry about me or feel guilty. You forget I'm there half the time!"

"Will, that's not true," said Mike. "I was there with you when everything happened with the Mind Flayer!"

"Yeah, I'm sure my problems were a nice distraction from missing EL!" Will shot back.

"That's not true and you know it!" said Mike angrily.

"It is true!" said Will. "You act like you want to listen to me anymore when I'm upset and you forget I'm there half the time and walk off without noticing you've left me behind!"

"We'll work on that," said Mike. He was starting to feel frustrated with Will. "But you need to speak up more."

"Speak up more? I don't have any right to speak up in this group. As a poor kid with a single working mother, I should just be grateful that you guys from your perfect families in your perfect neighborhoods even let me hang out with you. And I have no reason to ever complain since you risked your lives looking for me when I was in the Upside Down."

"We did that because we care," said Lucas. "That's what friends do."

"We know you've been through a lot," said Mike. "But Eleven was stuck in the lab for over twelve years and she's moving past it. If she can get over it, so can you."

Will's eyes were full of pain as he looked up at Mike. The taller boy regretted his words immediately. Mike opened his mouth to apologize, but Will's sad expression changed to anger and fury in a flash.

"Get out!" said Will as he hopped to his feet. "All of you." Dustin and Lucas were stunned. They had never seen Will that angry. They couldn't remember actually seeing Will ever get angry; annoyed or frustrated when he felt like people were treating him like a baby, perhaps, but never angry.

"Will, I'm sorry," said Mike.

"I said *get out*. Leave me alone!"

Mike took a couple steps toward Will. "Will, you're going through something right now. You've been through a lot. I want to be here for you. *We* want to be here for you. Crazy together, remember?"

"You just told me to speak up more, Mike. I'm speaking up right now: I don't need anyone going crazy with me. I just want to be alone, not GET OUT!" said Will angrily. He ran down the hall and slammed his bedroom door shut.

"C'mon, guys, let's go," said Dustin. The three boys got on their bikes to leave.

"Why didn't you say anything in there, Dustin?" asked Lucas.

"I was trying to listen to what Will had to say."

"So were we," said Lucas.

"Yeah, because cutting him off because you didn't like the wording he and telling him he should get over it is some great listening," said Dustin.

"Will's the one always saying he doesn't want to be babied," said Lucas. "We're not going to coddle him. We were trying to be patient with him just like we've been trying to show him patience for months, but he was being an asshole."

"So let him be an asshole for once!" said Dustin. He remembered how his friends had laughed at him at the Snow Ball. Will alone had apologized. He had also confided in Dustin that when a girl asked him to dance, he was terrified that it was part of a prank. It wasn't, but Will had become accustomed to being the butt of cruel jokes.

"He's always put up with us when we're being assholes. Considering everything he's been through, it says a lot that he's not an asshole all the time."

"El went through a lot too. Like Mike said, she's moving past it," said Lucas.

"Yeah, and I don't see El telling Will to get over it. Things are changing and-"

"We're not kids anymore," said Mike as he thought about Will. Things had changed for Will more than anyone else. "I mean, what did you think? We're gonna sit in my basement all day, playing video games for the rest of our lives?"

"No," said Dustin. "I didn't think that. I gotta go."

Dustin turned the corner before Mike and Lucas could stop him. Mike rested his head on the handle bars of his bike for a moment. He had managed to shoot his mouth off at two of his friends in just a few minutes. Mike turned and looked back at the Byers home for a minute. He considered going back inside and just listening to Will.

Mike remembered his mother talking about out she and his father had been patient with Mike when he was missing Eleven. Mike hadn't really felt patience or understanding from his parents that year. He had been forced to sell his toys at a garage sale. His parents had scoffed at the idea of those toys having emotional value. Many of them were gifts from his friends. Will had shoveled snow to save up and buy Mike a Yoda action figure for his birthday one year and Mike's parents had made him sell that, among other things. Will seemed hurt when he found out, but didn't say anything...

Will could hear his friends arguing because his window was open. He felt tears rolling down his cheeks. He sat on his bedroom floor leaning against the wall. Part of him wanted to call them back, but after they were gone, Will decided to go out to Castle Byers.

The rats and the tentacle he'd seen downtown were weighing on his mind. He'd tried to distract himself with the book (he'd been trembling too much to draw) because he had hoped he'd been

imagining things, but he feared that he had seen exactly what he thought he'd seen. Part of Will had wanted to tell his friends what had happened, but he hadn't. He had felt angry at them and he had used that anger to push them away partly because he had feared that they might suffer the same fate as Bob.

Will closed his eyes and held out his arms as he felt a gentle breeze. He imagined becoming a bird and flying away. He passed by the grave for his deceased dog Chester and felt a knot in his throat. The loyal canine, like time with his friends was another piece of his childhood that he'd lost.

Will tried to think of a plan for dealing with whatever he had seen, but he was tired and frazzled. Will remembered feeling much more exhausted and frightened 20 months earlier as he hid in the Upside Down version of Castle Byers. He curled up and fell asleep for a few hours. When he woke up, it was pouring rain. The fort was leaking, but Will decided to wait until the rain let up before he tried to go back to his house. He hoped his mother wasn't home yet as she'd worry about him.

Will saw some pictures of his friends that had gotten wet. He picked it up and started sobbing before throwing it down in frustration. He looked around the fort and noticed that several other items were ruined because of water damage. He started to think that perhaps he was getting too old for things like Castle Byers and being in a party. He didn't want to be too old though.

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"Mike, what's wrong?" asked Eleven as she noticed that Mike wasn't really paying attention to the movie. They had planned on going to the carnival, but the rain made that idea less appealing.

"It's Will," said Mike. "We had a fight today. I think something more is going on with him, though. He just seemed off all afternoon. Lucas and I walked off and he suddenly wasn't with us. He just went home without telling us." He was afraid to tell her the full nature of the fight. She wouldn't be too pleased if she'd known that he'd told Will to get over it and even compared Will's situation to hers. El had felt very protective of Will even before meeting him. Dustin had been

right.

"Oh," said Eleven. She closed her eyes and Mike could see her pupils moving back and forth under her eyelids. Her eyes shot open and she looked alarmed.

"What is it, El?"

"He's in Castle Byers," said Eleven. "We have to go get him. I think something's out there."

"What do you mean?" asked Mike.

"I saw something weird today. It was like a large tentacle. I only saw it for a second, so I thought I was imagining things, but it think it's real and it might be from the Upside Down."

"Let's go," said Mike.

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"What are you two doing here?" asked Dustin.

"We just wanted to hang out," said Lucas as he stood Dustin's front door with Max. Dustin stood to one side to let them in. They took off their rain ponchos.

"Are you alright, Dustin?" asked Max. Dustin shrugged. "I'm just a little tired from camp."

"You and Will both seem a little off lately," said Lucas.

"Things are changing," said Dustin. "It's fine, That's life."

"Yeah, well, we don't have to be assholes about it," said Lucas.

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"Will!" said Mike as he pulled back the tarp to see his friend crying in the fort. Mike and Eleven entered Castle Byers and went over to Will. "Are you alright?"

Will looked back and forth from Mike to Eleven. He then suddenly

got up, left the fort and started down the forest path in the pouring rain. Mike worried that Will would get sick because he wasn't wearing a raincoat. He may even do something to hurt himself "Will, wait!"

"Will," Eleven called. "I saw the rats and the tentacle."

Will stopped in his tracks and slowly turned around.

"I think you saw them too. That's why you didn't notice Mike and Lucas walk away, isn't it?"

Will was silent. He suddenly looked to the left of Mike and Eleven. His eyes widened and he charged at them, tackling them both.

"Will, what-" Mike started, but he was cut off by Eleven's scream. She held her hand out and sent several rats flying. The rodents hit the trees and fell to the ground. Mike saw a tentacle briefly before it disappeared. Eleven's nose was bleeding and Will had that same terrified expression from when he was experiencing now memories.

When Eleven was sure the creatures were gone, she crawled over to Will and hugged him. "Will, breathe. Deep breath in and out." It was something Hopper had taught her and she had been using it to help Will with his anxiety for months.

"It's real," said Will as he held a trembling hand near his mouth. "It's happening again."

"It's okay, Will," said Mike. "We'll figure this out."

"No!" said Will. "You guys can't get involved. You could end up like Bob."

"That won't happen," said Mike. "We need to all work together. That's how we've always won and it's how we'll get through whatever is happening. Now c'mon. Let's get you some dry clothes and we'll find the others."

Will thought it was odd that his mother and brother weren't home yet as he dried his hair with a towel while Eleven sat next to the radio wearing a blindfold. Mike made him some tea.

"I'm sorry about this afternoon, Mike," said Will.

"I'm the one who should be sorry," said Mike. "I shouldn't have been telling you to just be over everything that happened. That was a stupid thing to say."

"Maybe you're right though. Maybe I should be able to get over things if El can."

"She's not over it," said Mike. "Not really. I haven't personally gone through what either of you went through, but I don't think it's anything you can just get over."

"I want to, though," said Will.

"I know," said Mike. "Helping you wasn't just a distraction from missing Eleven. I'm sorry I've made you feel that way." Mike glanced at Eleven, who had her blindfold on. "You said a lot of little things were getting to you. What are those things?"

"I-I was separated from everyone when you all found El and fought the Demagorgan. Then I wasn't with you in the tunnels and I've been missing out on things, like I've only just been able to ride my bike around town with everyone and it's the same old bike when you've all gotten new ones, then I realized that I didn't have enough money for the games today and I can do the things I used to do to earn money anymore. It's just things like that."

"We would've given you money," said Mike.

"I know, I'm just tired of being in that situation all the time," said Will.

"I get that," said Mike. He put his hand on Will's shoulder and Will pulled away. He didn't seem to realize he was doing it. Mike looked at him carefully as Will drank his tea and stared out the window. "Can I tell you something, Will?"

Will picked up a paper towel and began to shred it. "Yeah, of course."

"I think my parents might get divorced," said Mike. "Nancy doesn't think they've ever been happy, but they seem really unhappy lately."

Will looked over at Mike. His expression was concerned more than surprised. "I'm sorry."

"The thing is, I'm not even sure I care," said Mike.

Eleven screamed and Mike and Will ran over to her. She pulled off her blindfold.

"What is it?" asked Mike.

"I saw a storm in the Upside Down," said Eleven.

"Was the sky red?" asked Will. Eleven nodded.

"What doesn't that mean?" asked Mike.

"I don't know," said Will. "But a saw storm in my now memories last year."

"Did you see what Dustin, Lucas, and Max are?" asked Mike.

"They're at Dustin's house," said Eleven.

"Let's go," said Will.

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"What are you guys doing here?" asked Dustin as he opened the door to see Mike, Will and Eleven standing there.

"We have a code red," said Mike as they all entered the house.

"What's going on?" asked Lucas.

"Rats," said Will. The phone rang, causing everyone to jump. Dustin answered.

"Yeah, they're here and it seems like they found some weird shit. Come on over," said Dustin.

"Who was that?" asked Max.

"It was Jonathan. He and Nancy were looking for Mike and Will.

Apparently, they saw some weird shit."

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A/N: This fic has nothing to do with any of my other fics and it's just going to be a one shot. I already wrote a season 3 fic and once was enough.